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ABSTRACT

Today, over 70 percent of the students of the Providence (Rhode Island) public schools are people of color. The dropout rate in Providence has been steadily decreasing over the last decade, but it remains high, ranked 16th among large cities in 1992. Race and ethnicity are relevant factors in scholastic achievement in Providence, and for that reason a conference on dropout prevention among culturally diverse student populations was held. In one session teachers, students, parents, and community members attended a keynote address on diversity and education by Peter J. Negroni, followed by local perspectives on issues of education and diversity. In the second session, participants divided into small groups to discuss barriers to school completion and solutions to difficulties. A task force reviewed notes from these groups and prepared nine recommendations for policies to increase the graduation rate. In the keynote address, Dr. Negroni, Superintendent of Schools in Springfield, Massachusetts, noted the requirements for school transformation, headed by the requirement for equitable funding. Task force recommendations for increased response to the needs of diverse groups are summarized. An appendix provides a glossary and lists of 31 references for further reading and local organizations for further information. (SLD)

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CULTURAL DIVERSITY: A Dialogue on Dropout Prevention

from a Conference & Task Force Proceedings

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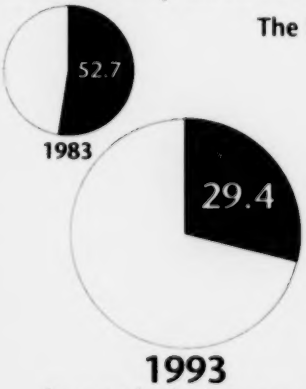
WHY ADDRESS DIVERSITY?

In the last twenty years Providence has experienced rapid and dramatic changes in its population. Between 1970 and 1980 there was a 12% decline in the white population. Between 1980 and 1990, Rhode Island had the largest percentage increase in Southeast Asians (245.6%) and the second largest increase in Hispanics (132.2%) in the United States. Rhode Island has had the greatest percentage increase in residents for whom English is not the primary language.[1] These dramatic changes have been felt most in the Providence public schools, where 70.6% of the student population are people of color. Specifically, 34.6% of the students are Hispanic, 29.4% are white, 24.1% are African American, 11% are Asian, and .7% of Providence students are Indigenous American.[2]

The dropout rate in Providence has been steadily decreasing in this decade; it went from 53% in 1983 to 29% in 1993, an improvement of 24%. Nonetheless, the dropout rate is high compared to other US cities. In 1992 it was the 16th highest among 250 large cities ranked by the National Council on Education Statistics.[3]



The Dropout Rate in Providence 1983-1994[4]

1983-84	52.7
1984-85	51.3
1985-86	49.8
1986-87	49.2
1987-88	44.9
1988-89	42.4
1989-90	40.8
1990-91	34.5
1991-92	31.9
1992-93	29.4

Race and ethnicity are relevant factors in scholastic achievement in Providence. The dropout rate among African American and Hispanic students is higher than that of white students, while Asian students are less likely to leave school than white students. The dropout rate among Asians is the lowest rate in Providence at 21.3%, however it is slightly higher in 1992-93 than it was the year before. Among 100 white students 29 will leave school, two more than in 1991-92, and among African Americans 33 of 100 students will leave school before graduating, representing an increase of 4% from the previous year.

Hispanic students drop out at a rate that is consistently higher than other groups, both locally and nationally. This rate has declined slightly in the last year in Providence, but of every 100 Hispanic students who started school in 1992, 37 dropped out. Local research suggests that, contrary to expectations, those who are most likely to drop out speak English fluently and are long time residents or native born mainlanders. Recent migrants or immigrants who speak only Spanish are more likely to stay in school than their more acculturated peers.[5]

Providence Dropout Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 1990-1993[6]

	Black	White	Hispanic	Asian	Total
1990-91	32.9	36.9	35.9	38.1	34.5
1991-92	29.4	27.4	39.6	20.9	31.9
1992-93	33.2	28.9	36.6	21.3	29.4

The administration and teachers of Providence are aware of the shifts in the composition of the urban schools and have made efforts to address the needs of the families they serve. However, there continue to be opportunities for improved understanding and communication between schools and families.

For that reason, the Program Committee and the Advisory Board of the Providence Dropout Prevention Collaborative planned a conference entitled, "Culturally Diverse Student Populations: A Dialogue on Dropout Prevention."

THE CONFERENCE

The goal of the conference was to bring together many sectors of the Providence community, including parents, students, teachers, administrators,and businesses, of many ethnic groups and races, to identify barriers to successful school completion for Providence's culturally diverse school population and to make recommendations for policy changes that will eliminate those barriers.

The Collaborative's Program Committee and staff planned and offered the conference in two sessions. In the first session the teachers, students, parents, and community members attended a keynote address on diversity and education by Dr. Peter J. Negroni, Superintendent of Public Schools in Springfield, Massachusetts, which is summarized in this report. Following Dr. Negroni's speech, a panel of Rhode Island citizens from diverse backgrounds gave individual local perspectives on the issues of education and diversity.

In the second session, conference participants divided into small groups to discuss five questions relating to barriers to school completion and solutions to difficulties. Groups were seated at tables according to the school they represented, the language they spoke (if they needed an interpreter), or in heterogeneous groupings that included parents, teachers, and community activists. There was also a table of students and one made up of parents. Several groups later presented their notes to the gathering, creating a dynamic dialogue on dropout prevention.

Each table addressed three questions and took careful notes on the discussion and resulting suggestions. A task force of volunteers reviewed those notes and forged nine recommendations for policies to increase the graduation rate among the diverse student body. They appear later in the text.

SUMMARY OF THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The Providence Dropout Prevention Collaborative welcomed Dr. Peter J. Negroni, Superintendent of Schools in Springfield, Massachusetts, as our keynote speaker. He is a career educator who has spent time working in several parts of the country. He spent 25 years in the public schools of New York City moving from elementary school teacher, secondary Spanish teacher, to Assistant Principal, Principal, and at 34 years old was one of the youngest superintendents in the history of the New York Public Schools. He served in that position for some 10 years. During that time he was involved in broad school improvement reforms in the areas of curriculum, organizational structure, assessment, and community and parental involvement.

When Dr. Negroni left New York City, he went to North Carolina to direct the Council of Educational Excellence, a county-wide effort in North Carolina to reform public education from the outside.

In September 1989 he was offered and accepted the Superintendency of the Springfield, Massachusetts, Public Schools and in the last four years has been engaged in a broad-based reform and restructuring effort that includes major system-wide projects in site-based management, school choice, curriculum and assessment reform and alignment, collaboration between all segments of the community, business partnerships, and adjustment in tracking and retention policies. Springfield has been cited as a beacon in implementing reforms that were later incorporated into new state education law.

Dr. Negroni has spoken at hundreds of conferences and prepared several major articles and papers on reform. He is a sought-after consultant and speaker across the country.

Dr. Negroni's talk centered on the need for transformation of the nation's public schools. He aknowledged that schools today are held accountable for educating all students, a task made particularly challenging by a difficult historical moment. Schools and educators are isolated and unsupported by the public. Present structures in school districts must be reinvented; they must be transformed to enable them to deliver the kind of education needed by a globally competitive and increasingly diverse 21st century America. This will require four interdependent transformations: Organizational, Pedagogical, Social and Attitudinal, and Political.

Organizational transformation includes such things as school calendar and schedule, evaluation methods, teacher-student ratios, and curriculum. Why not begin all schooling at age four and continue for 13 years? Pedagogical and organizational transformations must be interwoven, and teachers and administrators are the weavers. These transformations are not about new methods or approaches; they are revolutionary challenges to the essence of what has been believed for years and changes will be different in each community. This revolution includes a shift from process to results and requires a belief that continued improvement in student results is always the goal. Educators must seek ways to organize their classrooms and present material with distinct and varied methods, should provide students with the essential instruction, reinforcement, and growth in a challenging and supportive environment for the attainment of skills.

"This revolution includes a shift from process to results..."

Social and attitudinal transformation requires everyone in the community to recognize the interdependence of the school and the community. The purpose of schooling is not to sort and select children for the work force or for further education. Instead of assuming that everyone has limits and the schools' job is to define those limits so as not to cause anguish to students or their teachers, schools must see effort and development as the basis of instruction and fully integrate multicultural and diversity programs into the curriculum.

As part of the social and attitudinal transformation, Dr. Negroni

focused on a new, positive approach called "Inclusion" which is taking hold in many school systems. This idea is summarized in his recent article, "The Transformation of America's Public Schools" in *Equity and Excellence in Education.*[7] Seven exerpts follow:

This approach is holistic rather than piecemeal and views the goal of public education in terms of meeting the social and educational needs of all students in the least restrictive environment. Such a goal calls for a nationwide retraining of administrators, principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents, and the development of new class structures that promote a single and inclusive system of education.

It is increasingly expected that every classroom in America be involved in activities that will not only promote, but also facilitate inclusive education for all students. Such a vision and environment will make the public schools' motto, "Every child can and will learn," a reality. Inclusive education is a fundamental belief which considers each person an important, accepted member of the school and the community. Inclusive educators work to create a sense of oneness and belonging within the group; they celebrate diversity. The focus is on the positive, including respect and integrity for all people.

- Inclusion focuses on everyone's abilities and possibilities—not on disabilities and limitations.
- Inclusion acknowledges that everyone has different skills, talents, and gifts to offer—no one has to be good at everything.
- Inclusion means a climate of acceptance is created—no one is rejected or left out.
- Inclusion means that all school staff, students, and parents work together as a team in partnership.
- Inclusion is characterized by gentleness, individualization, openness, and humor.
- Inclusion means talking openly about differences in a productive and positive way.
- Inclusion is a daily ongoing process—not just mainstreaming in lunch, art, music, and physical education.

- Inclusion is something that changes all the time. It is a series of small adjustments to meet the needs of the people involved.
- Inclusion is characterized by an attitude of problem-solving to discover what is possible.
- Inclusion creates opportunities for both adults and children to learn and work together.
- Inclusion is a dynamic rather than a static process.

No checklist or definition can capture the spirit and commitment to all children and youth inherent in this concept. It points to the need for America to develop inclusive schools where all community members participate fully and are valued by all. Inclusion is truly a process through which all children can develop the skills, the attitudes, and the epxeriences to be fully enfranchised members of society. It can and should be the focus of the American public schools as we move towards the 21st century, for it exemplifies all of the transformation required to make our future a viable one for all people in our country.

The last of the four transformations needed is political transformation. This includes political change within the school as well as in society as a whole. Will America support public education in urban centers when the people being educated do not resemble, either in color or class, the people who control the economy? Funding sources and policies must change: the federal government must play a more extensive role in funding and distribution of money must be more equitable.

Equity is the single most critical issue in education today; equity in funding and also in expectation of students. The present system is such that if one is born poor, more than likely an inferior education will be received. Further, we are still suffering from practices and attitudes developed during the period of enslavement; practices that created different expectations for the races.

Dr. Negroni concludes:

In addition to asking whether or not those who pay for education will continue to pay to educate those of a different color, a different language, and a different socioeconomic level, we now need to ask whether or not those who govern the educational process will strive for the betterment of those of a different color, a different

language, and a different socioeconomic level. So far, too few have fought for equity and excellence for these students.

The performance of Black and Hispanic students over the last quarter century has conditioned everyone, including their parents, to think that they are not able to achieve at the level of White children. It is going to take a great transformation to have those who govern education—teachers, principals, administrators, school board members, and especially the general public—to believe that poor Black and Hispanic students can be taught and will be able to learn as well as White students.

"...a different approach to the preparation of educators"

What is it going to take to make that transformation? It will necessitate a different approach to the preparation of educators. It will require a different environment from what we now call the school. It will entail a new vision and a new belief system. It will mean a major educational paradigm shift. It will demand brave and bold leadership.

The transformation must be built one success upon another. For we must see that our old "truth" is a lie. We have ample evidence that indicates poor Black, Hispanic, and female students can compete and achieve as well as anyone else. But until we actually "see it with our own eyes," the transformation will be incomplete.

In summation, the aforementioned transformations can take place in America if we understand and accept the following precepts:

- More money to advance the transformation of public schools is absolutely necessary.
- Children do not come to school the same way. However, it is our response to how they come that makes the difference. It is the role of school personnel to provide students with highly challenging learning opportunities as well as to present them with instruction that considers the learning style of each student.
- The superintendent of schools must be the CAC (Chief Advocate for Children) and have the responsibility to lead the development of a community vision and assure its realization.
- The present system of funding public education is inequitable and must be changed. Some children cost more to educate than others. Furthermore, where one is born to a great extent deter-

mines how much will be spent for their education. It is in the nation's best interest to educate everyone equally.

- The present model of education must be adjusted so that first time quality becomes the norm and not remediation as it presently the case. Schools must change their focus. Education or schooling should begin at 4 years old for all youngsters. This can be done without spending additional money. All we would have to do is rearrange our present curriculum and keep children in school for 13 years—just beginning one year earlier.
- The relationship between the school, the home, and the community must be understood and internalized. Schools need the community and the community needs the schools.
- Our goals and curriculum must be realigned. What do students really need to know for the 21st century? Every community must ask itself, what do we want our children to know? What will be accepted as evidence that they have learned? How can what they have learned be measured? Multidimensional assessments must be developed to accomplish this task.
- Schools and classrooms and the way they look and are organized must change dramatically. They must be organized around the interest and needs of the students and not around the interest and needs of adults. Enough is known to do this right now. Although there is an abundance of research on how children learn, not $^{1}/_{10}$ of what is known about learning and teaching has been implemented.

Technology

- Technology as the key to the future must be emphasized. Not even $^{1}/_{10}$ of the power of technology is currently being used. We must move from the chalkboard to the electronic board. We must integrate learning areas around the technology that exists.
- The principle of organized abandonment must be learned. Abandon the things that have not worked for a long time, such as age-grade grouping, retention, tracking, standardized tests, the Carngegie unit as a process and not a product unit; abandon the present system of scheduling, particularly at the high school level; abandon specific student to teacher ratios, and let teachers decide what is necessary, appropriate and effective.

- Our schools must be transformed from places where people are told what to do, to places where students, parents, teachers, and administrators identify the issues and invent the processes that will be used to implement and manage the changes necessary to meet their goals. These constituencies must be able to exercise control over their own destiny. The classroom and school are the units of change and, as such, local governance must be promoted, encouraged, and maintained. With this control and power will come increased accountability.
- Choice as a school reform device must be used with great care lest we create new inequities.
- Massive professional development programs are needed at the school level, and they should be planned and implemented by teachers with the support of administrators.
- Additional time is needed in the school day where teachers can plan together around the issues that confront them. Schools must become the units of change where teachers see the interdependence of what they teach and how they work and support each other.
- The interdependence of the quality of life in our community with the quality of our schools must be stressed. The relationship between quality of education and the prerequisites of democracy must be understood.

The educators of America's schools have an awesome task. At the same time, this awesome task has provided a great opportunity. America is poised for its greatest failure or its greatest success. Educators have been placed in an enviable position. They will decide the fate of the great American experiment called democracy. America cannot and will not survive without an educated populace. What a challenge! What an opportunity!

After Dr. Negroni concluded, six local educators and community activists responded to his speech and commented on the issues that were raised. Many spoke of their own experiences in the public schools and called for reform in educational institutions to help them respond better to diversity in the learning community. The panelists were:

Malcolm Anderson is a founder of the Black Student Leadership Group (B.S.L.G.) and has been a leader in defending minority students' rights. Mr Anderson is an Assistant Planning Coordinator with The Providence Plan.

Maria del Pilar Velásquez is Program Coordinator for the Hispanic Early Intervention and Dropout Prevention Case Management Program at the International Institute of RI. She has worked as a substance abuse counselor for adolescents, a Spanish teacher, and an interpreter and translator for the Providence Public Schools.

Sally Gabb has been the Director of Education for Travelers Aid Society of RI for five years. She is a veteran community organizer and has worked in adult education and dropout recovery programs for 20 years.

Phyllis Lamidi, of URI Cooperative Extension, is a Cultural Diversity and Family Life Education Specialist. She is a member of the New England Consortium Task Force on Diversity and is certified by the Multicultural Institute of George Washington University. Ms. Lamidi has organized and implemented workshops on cultural diversity throughout New England.

Soneprasith Phrommavanh serves as Education Director of the Socioeconomic Development Center for Southeast Asians. His activities there include gang prevention, the Youth and Family Development Program, and dropout prevention in the Southeast Asian community. Mr. Phrommovanh speaks four languages and studied at the Université de Paris VIII Vincennes in France before his current work toward a BA in Social Science at Providence College.

Darrell Waldron is the Executive Director of the RI Indian Council and is a Native American community leader. He has been an organizer and advocate for urban Indians in RI for the past ten years. He is an experienced carpet installer and has trained several Native American tribes across the country in carpet installation. The RI Indian Council serves urban and off-reservation Native Americans in Providence.

SUGGESTIONS FROM DISCUSSION GROUPS

Small group discussions among teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community members focused on identifying the barriers to successful school completion and offering solutions for overcoming those barriers. Discussions were structured by these questions:

BARRIERS

1. What specific factors contribute to alienating students of different racial, ethnic and language groups from the school system?
2. Given the cultural/linguistic diversity of Providence's public school population, what institutional barriers, policies and practices prevent many students from graduating from high school?
3. Given the cultural/linguistic diversity of Providence's public school population, what social and economic barriers prevent many students from graduating from high school?

SOLUTIONS

4. What is needed to provide a safer and improved learning environment for Providence's culturally diverse student body?
5. How can we eliminate some of the barriers and develop strategies which promote successful school completion for all students?

As a result of these small group discussions, conference participants formulated the following suggestions and observations on education among diverse communities:

I. **Cultural Insensitivity**—Hire more culturally diverse teachers, counselors, and office staff who are a reflection of society, who are bilingual, and who provide positive role models for children of color. Sensitize administrators, teachers, staff, and students to the issue of diversity through training. Teach them more about the value systems of other cultures. Develop an orientation to the school for new students and parents and for school faculty and staff to become responsible for cultural sensitivity in education. Families have lost their traditional structure and their extended family support systems, especially if they are recent immigrants, and are culturally lost.

II. **Lack of Parental Involvement**—Hire more counselors and home visitors. Offer counselors and parenting workshops to parents in summer and at night. Give teachers incentives to visit the homes and work more with the community.

Increase outreach to parents and involve them in an orientation program to acclimate new students and parents. Report the positive to parents. Schools should keep track of student attendance or report to parents.

Provide more translators at events and communication in several languages. Provide transportation for parents to school functions and daycare if necessary. Train parents as well as children in responsibil-

ity and accountability. Economic difficulties keep parents from contributing time to their children. Overworked parents with children in several schools cannot devote time to schools. Make schools more friendly to parents.

III. **Lack of Support Services**—Involve community agencies more in providing for needs of students and let the community into the school setting. Increase knowledge of resources; schools should know which agency to contact. Parents need economic opportunities, cultural orientation and outreach. They need schools to come to their homes, not the opposite. Provide transportation and daycare. Lack of transportation is a problem.

IV. **School Violence/Safety**—Concentrate on school safety issues, conflict resolution and interpersonal relations. Drugs are a problem. We need more supervision in the buildings and on the grounds; hire more aids and security guards. Issue IDs for school personnel and students. Gang conflicts can be a never-ending string of retaliations.

V. **Disciplinary Policies**—In-school suspension and community service hours are positive and practical alternatives to current disciplinary policies, which do not help students, particularly newly arrived students from other countries. Often these students are living in two worlds and trying to balance two value systems.

VI. **Community Service**—Students should have options and opportunities to give back to communities through community service. Utilize community service as a strategy to understand cultural diversity.

VII. **Restructure Schools**—Lower the teacher-student ratio. Create a job classification allowing talented people to teach even though they do not have "credentials."

Create permanent bonding among students and with teachers by keeping the same groups of students together throughout their school careers, regardless of where they move. Review tests which place students and redesign them to be culturally sensitive and non-biased. Abolish tracking.

Create smaller schools or units. Return to the concept of neighborhood schools. Experiment with site-based management, newcomer schools, transitional schools, alternative schools and At-Risk Schools. Start a "halfway" school for those who register after October. Lengthen the school day. Experiment with work/study or flexible

schedules, year 'round schools and night school. Make schools a social center for the community.

VIII. **Curriculum and Methods**—Reassess current curriculum and incorporate lessons to educate in diversity. Learning should involve students through peer education and enhance a combination of academics and work preparation. There is too much emphasis on the college track, vocational education should be expanded.

IX. **Higher Education Pre-Training of Educators**—Educators should be prepared and educated at the higher education level for teaching in a culturally diverse school setting and appropriately communicating with students and their families. Teachers should learn more about the cultures of their students: their literature, history, and art.

X. **Lack of Extra Curricular Activities**—Transportation shortages impede social interaction between students. Do not base participation in sports, clubs and activities on academic achievement. Provide after-school employment opportunities for students. Encourage community activities in the school building; make it the social center of the neighborhood.

XI. **Equal Education Opportunities and Resources in Classrooms**—Education needs to be better funded. All classes, including mainstream, ESL, Bilingual, Special Education, and other special programs, should have the same access to educational resources (fiscal or otherwise) to provide quality education for all students. Use heterogeneous groupings of ability levels. Make learning more active, fun, experiential, and hands-on. Spend more time on the material.

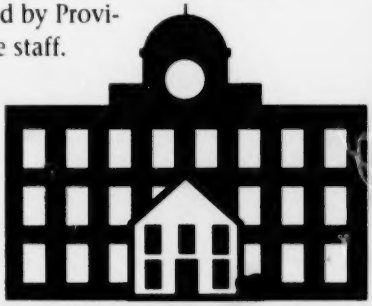
No program should be segregated within the physical structure of school buildings. Some groups felt that bilingual classes should be expanded, others were convinced that bilingual programs hold children back.

XII. **Change Student Behavior**—Students themselves are not culturally sensitive. They seek others who are culturally similar and do not appreciate differences. They stereotype and engage in power struggles between races. They use racial slurs and retaliate against each other with violence. Gangs, teen pregnancy, and drugs are growing problems. Many young people have few goals beyond money, clothes, and cars and do not see the relevance or benefits of education. They need to build their self esteem.

XIII. **Change Teaching Conditions and Methods**—Lower the teacher-student ratio. Teachers need to communicate more with students and parents, give the students more individual attention, and have higher expectations of students. Form Teacher/Counselor partnerships and classroom teams of teachers and students from all programs. Offer common planning time. Require teachers to make home visits. Extend the teachers' work day and the school year. Evaluate teachers. Increase teacher commitment to students. Require all teachers to live in the community. Do not promote students until they have mastered skills. Do not show frustration. Be friends with students. Give credit for team work. Do not stereotype kids. Focus on the positive.

XIV. **Change Family and Community Conditions**—Poverty, drugs, prostitution, crime, single parent families, the welfare system, lack of positive male role models, overworked parents who do not have time for their children, parents who do not know how to handle their children: these factors in the community and the family are barriers to student success. Parents work and keep children home to babysit, meet the gas man, repairman, etc. Promote English as a Second Language classes for parents.

Several of the discussion groups shared their observations and suggestions with the rest of the conference attendees, as Dr. Negroni facilitated the process. Notes from the discussions were collected from each group and were later compiled by Providence Dropout Prevention Collaborative staff.



TASK FORCE PROCEEDINGS

Members of the Collaborative and people who attended the conference volunteered at the time of the conference to serve on the Cultural Diversity Task Force which would produce this policy document based on the findings of the Fall conference and include recommendations to eliminate barriers associated with increasing the graduation rate among Providence's culturally diverse student population. Of the 44 people on the mailing list, 22 participated actively in the distillation and prioritization of the notes from small group discussions and in the formation of nine recommendations.

The Task Force met four times between March and July 1994 to review the comments and suggestions produced in the small group discussions at the conference. At the first meetings they read the table notes verbatim from typed transcripts and distilled them into the eleven broad categories which reflect the concerns of the parents, students, educators, and community activists who attended the conference.

In subsequent meetings, members prioritized the factors they had identified as crucial and offered suggestions for addressing them. Consequently, the suggestions were discussed, clarified, in some cases consolidated and in others rejected, and finally a set of nine recommendations emerged. These recommendations address the issues the Task Force identified as most crucial to achieving dialogue and harmony with the culturally diverse population that makes up our learning community. These issues are:

1. **Promote cultural sensitivity**
2. **Increase parent involvement**
3. **Create curriculum and structural changes in the schools**

Of these three issues cultural insensitivity was far and away the single most important barrier to graduation in the estimation of task force members. While lack of parent involvement was considered top priority by nine members and inadequate curriculum and teacher training were prioritized by five and four members respectively, eleven of fourteen Task Force members considered cultural insensitivity the top priority.

The Task Force reconvened in late September 1994 to review, revise, and finalize this report. The following recommendations are the result of the Task Force's reading of the notes from the small group discussions at the conference:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION
IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE SETTING

Promote Cultural Sensitivity

1. Hire more cultural and linguistic minority teachers and guidance counselors. Job requirements should be modified to allow talented new personnel to come into the system.

2. Provide In-Service Training For Teachers and Staff:

Provide opportunities and encouragement for teachers and staff of all schools to take courses in the art, history, literature, and

language of non-European cultures such as African, African-American, Latin American, Caribbean, Asian, Asian-American, and Indigenous American.

Require that teachers, administrators and staff of schools attend cultural sensitivity workshops at least once a year, to be given by different local organizations and individuals.[8]

3. Modify teacher training. Develop and promote classes at the college level that explore the history, literature and art of third world countries on an adult level. Make them a part of the BA in Education and MAT curricula.

Increase the amount of time that student teachers are required to spend in the classroom and in the community.

Require a second language for a BA in Education or an MAT, as we do for other degrees.

Create Curriculum and Structural Changes in the Schools

4. Extend the work day for teachers to include an hour after school each day to be used for parent contact, after-school clubs, individual tutoring, or planning.

5. Develop a curriculum that includes the history and art of Latin America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Africa, and African-Americans. Give these cultures' contributions the same time and weight as European history and art. Teachers should work with parents and students in the class to develop lessons and activities about a variety of cultures.

6. Link schools to each other as a source of inspiration and to create a sense of belonging. Link elementary schools to middle schools, middle schools to high schools, and high schools to colleges. Take younger students on visits, to concerts, plays, and games at their next school. Institute older student-to-younger student tutoring for credit.

Increase Parent Involvement

7. Inform parents of their children's attendance. Parents are often unaware that their child has been chronically absent until it is too late. The school should call home each day that the student is absent. Provide schools with the technology to contact parents.

8. Evaluate teachers and staff. Ask parents and students what they think.

9. Require parents to pick up their children's report cards at school instead of letting students bring them home. Have all the teachers available to discuss the grades with parents at that time.

COMMON SENSE TIPS FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION AMONG CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

A subcommittee developed "Common Sense Tips For Dropout Prevention Among Culturally Diverse Students and Parents," "Some Terms and Definitions" and a short reading list. These are intended only as an aid to school administrators, faculty, and staff and should not be considered any more than loose guidelines. The subcommittee was made up of Phyllis Lamidi, Sakal M.P. Kim, and Helen Duffy; S. Kai Cameron and José González also contributed.

- Learn to pronounce students' names correctly—first and last. Make an effort to call students by the name they prefer.
- You cannot tell a person's heritage by their appearance. Some Italians are dark and some are blonde. Some Hispanics are black and some are blonde. Some African Americans have blue eyes and light skin and hair.
- Do not judge parents or children by the way they dress. Standards of beauty and appropriateness vary widely. What looks completely proper to a parent may look too sexy to a teacher.
- Start from the assumption that all parents care deeply about their children's education.
- Try to contact parents directly, not through the students, and go to their territory rather than expecting parents to come to the school.
- Contact parents when things go well. However, remember that some Laotian, Cambodian, and Hmong parents may be reluctant to hear praise for their children. They would prefer to hear that he or she is average and behaves appropriately.
- Translate all material for parents into the appropriate languages. Be cautious of literal or poor translations.
- Be aware that limited English does not reflect limited intelligence. Do not be afraid to challenge students with tasks that demand thinking.
- Allow students to use their native language in the classroom and elsewhere among themselves. Being bilingual will help them in the job market later.

- Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong cultures show respect by not looking directly at the speaker. To many white USamericans, looking down indicates guilt or shame. Therefore, "Look at me when I'm speaking to you" is a culturally loaded expression.
- Do not label children "at-risk of failure," especially not on the basis of their culture. They may be at risk of not fitting into the dominant culture, but not at risk of failure.
- Slavery is not a condition unique to African Americans. Virtually all races have been enslaved at some time in their history. All races have fought tribal wars.
- A cult is a system of belief. If the religious beliefs of Africa's Yoruba people form a cult then so do those of Methodists, Catholics, and so forth.
- It is not "racism in reverse" for people of color to gather in affinity groups for mutual support or to take interest in the group's history and culture.
- At least 4/5 of the world's population consists of people of color. It is statistically incorrect to refer to people of color as minorities. The term "minority" reinforces the idea of people of color as "other."
- No one is abused because of their race. They are abused because of racism.
- It is not a compliment to tell a person "I do not think of you as Jewish/Black/Latina/Native American" or "I think of you as White."
- Parents' lack of contact with the teacher may indicate respect rather than disinterest. Some cultures, such as Puerto Rican culture, may view school as the territory of teachers and view parent involvement as inappropriate and disrespectful of the teacher's authority.
- Remember that Puerto Ricans are US citizens from birth; they are not immigrants. Puerto Rico is part of the United States.
- Recognize that "Hispanic" and "Latino" are terms used to group a wide variety of people who speak Spanish as their first language or grew up in a country with Spanish as its primary language. There is no single country that defines the Hispanic culture.
- When studying or teaching Hispanic cultures, concentrate on the Caribbean, where most of Providence's Hispanic students are from,

rather than on Spain. Some Latin Americans relate to Spain the same way American Indians might relate to England.

- Never praise a Puerto Rican baby without first saying "God bless her" (or him), or "Que Dios le bendiga". It is considered dangerous and therefore offensive to praise babies without asking God to protect them first.
- The hand gesture USAmericans use to indicate a person's height is used only for referring to animals' height in Central America.
- Do not touch a Cambodian, Laotian, or Hmong person's hair or head. This is a very private, sacred part of the body. The foot is the lowest part of the body and it is an insult to expose the bottom of your foot or shoe to someone or to use your foot to point to them.
- Cambodian, Laotian and Hmong men and boys may show platonic friendship by patting each other's flanks. This does not have any sexual meaning.
- Some Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong families celebrate birthdays, others do not.
- In Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong traditions some parents reward children by giving them a treat or a special privilege or by actions such as a hug. They do not shower verbal praise on their children or say, "I love you."
- Doing things quickly is not considered a good trait in the Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong cultures.
- Some Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong parents may not ask a lot of questions even if they want to know something. They consider asking questions rude because it seems to challenge the speaker.
- It is considerate and polite to be late in the Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong cultures, whether it is to a meeting or to a wedding, because it shows you are not in a hurry but are willing to take time and consider other people.
- "Race" is an arbitrary and imprecise concept. There are no real divisions between human beings, only a continuum of variations that constantly change.
- Non-dominant cultures can and do cooexist with the dominant culture in the United States.

Some of these points were excerpted from *Cultural Etiquette: A Guide for the Well Intentioned*, by Amoja Three Rivers.

APPENDIX

SOME TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

IMPORTANT: No one can tell anyone else who they are. People define themselves according to their feelings of solidarity or belonging. This is meant only as an basic guide to understanding the different peoples and cultures that make up our city and an explanation of terms.

Multi-cultural–Refers to a situation in which several cultures are represented. For example: A multicultural classroom may encompass the African-American culture, the Jewish culture, the Hispanic culture, the Asian or Southeast Asian culture, and the Irish culture.

Diversity–Refers to diversity even within a single culture or group. For example Northern African-American families may differ greatly from Southern African-American families, young people may be very different from older people, men's attitudes may differ from women's, and rural customs may diverge from urban ones even within a single culture.

Parent Involvement–Volunteers in Providence Schools (VIPS) outlines five types of parent involvement:
Type 1: Parents ensure child's health and safety, provide guidance, supervision and discipline, and support school learning with positive home conditions.
Type 2 : Schools communicate clearly with all parents in necessary languages to ensure that parents are fully informed.
Type 3: Parents participate in the schools as volunteers providing assistance in school activities.
Type 4: Parents are involved with learning activities at home.
Type 5: Parents participate in making decisions concerning school improvement.

Indigenous American, Aboriginal peoples, Native American, American Indian–These are broad terms that group together the thousands of ancient and diverse original cultures from all over the American continent. There is controversy over which term is preferable, and even whether these terms are useful at all, but this committee recommends that the term Indigenous people be used. Indigenous people, primarily from the Narragansett and Wampanoag nations, make up .9% of Providence's population.

Latino, Hispano, Hispanic–These are broad terms which group together the many and diverse cultures and peoples who speak Spanish. Hispanics may be of any race, appearance, and religion. There is controversy over which term is preferable, and some doubt as to whether these terms are useful at all, but this committee recommends the term Latino. Latinos represent 15.5% of Providence's population.

Puerto Rican–People from The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory. All Puerto Ricans are US citizens from birth; they are not immigrants. This term includes the Taino, Carib, and Arawak indigenous peoples and their descendants, people of Spanish (European) descent and people of African descent. 18% of Providence's Hispanic population is Puerto Rican.

Borinqüeño (Bo-reen-káy-nyo) **or Borícua** (Bo-rée-kwa)–See Puerto Rican

Dominican–People from or descended from residents of the Caribbean nation of the Dominican Republic (also referred to as "D.R.," "R.D.," or Santo Domingo) on the island of Hispañola. This term includes many people of African and indigenous descent. Dominicans represent some 19% of Providence's Hispanic population.

Guatemalan–People from or descended from residents of the Central American nation of Guatemala. This term includes many indigenous peoples whose first language is not Spanish but is one of hundreds of ancient languages such as Quiché and Maya, as well as people of African and Spanish descent. Guatemalans represent some 7.5% of Providence's Hispanic population.

Spanish–The language spoken by Spaniards and Latin Americans.

African-American–Refers to Americans of African ancestry.

African–Although many peoples in the world today can trace their roots to Africa, "African" refers to people from one of the 40 nations of Africa, some of whom are White.

Black–This term can be an insult in some cultures and can be a term of endearment in others. Some Americans of African descent reject this term and prefer to be called African-American.

Haitian–People from the Caribbean nation of Haiti, which shares the island of Hispañola with the Dominican Republic. Most Haitians are of African ancestry and speak a Creole French or French.

Cape Verdean–People with roots in the independent nation of Cape Verde, an archipelago 370 miles off the Coast of Senegal, Africa. Some Cape Verdeans may be of African ancestry while others identify themselves as white. Portuguese is the official language, but a Creole Portuguese is the most spoken language.

Azorean–People from the Azores, an archipelago off the coast of Portugal. These islands are a part of Portugal and they speak Portuguese.

Portuguese–People with roots in Portugal. They speak Portuguese and are predominantly Roman Catholic.

White–Traditional term for people of European descent (although Europe today is multiracial). White is a broad term encompassing many and varied cultures, languages, values, and religions. Whites constitute 69% of Providence and 30% of the Providence public school student population.

Italian, Italo-American–People of Italian descent, may be fair or quite dark skinned. They are predominantly Catholic. Older Italo-Americans may speak Italian, young people generally cannot.

Irish, Irish American–People whose roots are in the European island of Ireland. 95% are Catholic or Protestant. The Southern three quarters of the island is the Republic of Ireland, an independent nation; the Northern tip is part of the United Kingdom. Although they speak English, Irish people are not Anglo-Saxon; they are Celtic. Gaelic is taught as a second language in Ireland.

Anglo-Saxon–People of English descent. Descendants of the ancient Germanic tribes of Angles and Saxons who made their culture on the island that later became England.

Jewish–Judaism is a religion which follows the teachings in the Old Testament. Members may be African, Middle-eastern, or European. There are several sectors of the religion; some traditional and others modern. Jewish is also considered a race, independent of whether one practices the religion of Judaism or not. A Jewish homeland, Israel, was established by the U.N. after World War II. In our area most Jews have roots in Germany, Russia, and Western Europe.

Asian–People with roots on the continent of Asia. The term encompasses many vastly different cultures and some 35 independent nations, from Siberia to Indonesia, from Iran to Japan. 5.9% of Providence's population is Asian.

Southeast Asian–Southeast Asia consists of 10 independent nations: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanma (formerly Burma), Philippines, Singapore,Thailand, and Vietnam. Many Cambodian Laotian, and Hmong people reside in Providence.

Cambodian–People from Cambodia. When Cambodia became Communist in 1975, many who had sided with the United States fled to the US and other countries as well.

Hmong (mong)–People originally from Southern China, who migrated, primarily to Laos, to escape the Chinese. They sided with the US in the Vietnam War and after Laos became Communist in 1975 they fled Lao communists to come to the US and other countries. The word Hmong means free man.

Laotian/Lao–People from Laos. When Laos became Communist in 1975 many who had sided with the US in the Vietnam War fled to the US and other countries as well.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: A Reading and Video List

Note: This is a list of accessible material for learning about diverse cultures and ways of interacting. Most of these works are suitable for high school students.

General Information

The Ethnic Myth, *by Stephen Steinberg*
Cultural Etiquette: A Guide for the Well Intentioned, *by Amoja Three Rivers*
Blue Eye, Brown Eye, *a film by Jane Wright*

On African American Culture

Black Children, *by Janice Hale*
The Habit of Surviving, *by Kesho Scott*
The Autobiography of Malcolm X, *by Alex Haley*
Roots, *by Alex Haley*
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, *by Maya Angelou*
Beloved, *by Toni Morrison*
African American Folktales, *Roger D. Abrahams, Ed.*
In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens, *by Alice Walker*

On White USAmerican Culture

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin
In My Father's Court, *by Isaac Bashevis Singer*
The Urban Villagers, *by Herbert Gons*
The Crucible, *a play by Arthur Miller*
The Scarlet Letter, *by Nathaniel Hawthorne*

On Hispanic Cultures

I, Rigoberta Menchu, *an autobiography by Menchu, an indigenous Guatemalan*
One Hundred Years of Solitude, *a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Columbian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez*
How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, a *novel about a Dominican family by Julia Alvarez*
Mambo Mouth, *a comedic video performance on being a US Hispanic by Jon Leguizamo*
The House of Spirits, *by Chilean author Isabel Allende*

On Indigenous American Cultures

Talking Leaves, *short stories by Native Americans, Craig Lesley, ed.*
Tracks, *a novel by a reknown Indigenous American author, Louise Erdrich*
A Yellow Raft in Blue Water, *by Michael Dorris*

On Asia and Asian Americans

The Killing Fields, *a film about Cambodia*
Year Zero, *a book about Cambodia*
The Scent of Green Papaya, *a film about family life in Vietnam before the war*
Heaven and Earth, *a film about Vietnam by Oliver Stone*
Any book on Buddhism
Eat Drink Man Woman, *a film from Taiwan*
Warrior Woman, *a novel by Chinese-American author Maxine Hong Kingston*

LOCAL GROUPS THAT OFFER MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

URI Cooperative Extension—Cultural Diversity and Family Education, Phyllis Lamidi, 847-0287

Socio-Economic Development Center for Southeast Asians (SEDC)—Saban Him, 620 Potter Ave, Providence, RI 02907, 831-1992

Progreso Latino—Matilda Samsone, The Juanita Sanchez Center, 421 Elmwood Ave., Providence, RI 02907, 467-0111

The National Conference of Christians and Jews—300 Ray Drive, Suite 2, Providence, RI 02906-4829

The Rhode Island Indian Council—Darrell Waldron, 444 Friendship Street, Providence, RI 02908, 521-2411

The Support Center—Jane Arsenault, 18 Imperial Place, Suite 6F, Providence, RI 02903, 861-1920

Multifunctional Resource Center—Fran Collignon, 144 Wayland Avenue, Providence, RI 02906, 274-9548

Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy (CHisPA)—José González, The Juanita Sanchez Center, 421 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, RI 02907, 467-0111

The Rhode Island Black Heritage Society—Linda Deishinni, 46 Aborn Street, Providence, RI 02903, 751-3490

RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION

The Cambodian Society of Rhode Island—Samnang Becker, President, Box 3240, Providence, RI 02907, 521-0832

The Laotian Association—Lang Souphida, President, 47 Carr Street, Providence, RI 02907, 941-1337

The United Hmong Association—Gerry Kue, President, 20 Waverly Street, Providence, RI 02907, 273-2159

The Vietnamese Society of Rhode Island—Than Nguyen, President, 133 Arnold Street, Lincoln, RI 02865

Progreso Latino—Matilda Samsone, The Juanita Sanchez Center, 421 Elmwood Ave., Providence, RI 02907, 467-0111

Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy (CHisPA)—Cristina Abuelo, The Juanita Sanchez Center, 421 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, RI 02907, 467-0111

The Rhode Island Black Heritage Society—Linda Deishinni, 46 Aborn Street, Providence, RI 02903, 751-3490

The Rhode Island Indian Council—Darrell Waldron, 444 Friendship Street, Providence, RI 02908, 521-2411

FOOTNOTES

1 US Bureau of Census, 1990

2 Rhode Island Department of Education, Student Census File Summary Nov 1993

3 National Center for Education Statistics, *1993 Dropout Report*

4 Providence Public Schools, *School Dropout Report: 1992-93*

5 *Hispanic Students and Their Teachers Assess the Needs of Local Hispanic Students*, 1993, URI-Urban Field Center

6 URI Urban Field Center

7 *Equity and Excellence in Education*, The University of Massachusetts School of Education Journal, (Volume 27, Number 1, April 1994, P. 20-27)

8 A list of local groups offering workshops on diversity and multicultural education can be found on the last page of this report.

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